

HOMELESS PERSONS

Homelessness has been evident in the City of Cambridge for years, and accounts for a considerable amount of activity throughout the city. Since the beginning of 2001, there have been 251 arrests of homeless persons, which accounts for 10% of the arrests made throughout the 2001-2002 time span. Many of the offenders are repeat offenders, and many are known to the city. High traffic areas usually produce the highest amount of homeless persons, such as Central Square, Harvard Square, Porter Square, as well as areas where there are shelters such as 240 Albany St. The following report depicts what crimes have been occurring in Cambridge, and by which homeless persons. This information is broken down numerically and spatially, and highlights the top homeless offenders based on past offenses.

| Crime | 2001 Arrests | % of total 2001 arrests for this crime | 2002 Arrests | % of total 2002 arrests for this crime |
|--|---------------------|---|---------------------|---|
| Assault - Aggravated | 4 | 4% | 16 | 11% |
| Assault - Simple | 15 | 14% | 9 | 6% |
| Auto Theft | 1 | 1% | 0 | N/A |
| Burglary - home or business | 6 | 6% | 7 | 5% |
| Burglary - from motor vehicle | 2 | 2% | 3 | 2% |
| Disorderly/Affray | 8 | 7% | 3 | 2% |
| Domestic Dispute | 0 | N/A | 1 | N/A |
| Drinking in Public | 11 | 10% | 17 | 12% |
| Driving Offenses | 0 | N/A | 1 | N/A |
| Forgery/Fraud | 1 | 1% | 4 | 3% |
| Indecent Exposure | 2 | 2% | 6 | 4% |
| Larceny/Theft (excluding shoplifting & larceny from MV) | 3 | 3% | 1 | N/A |
| Narcotics Possession/Sale | 10 | 9% | 15 | 10% |
| OUI | 0 | N/A | 2 | 1% |
| Peeping & Spying | 1 | 1% | 0 | N/A |
| Rape | 0 | N/A | 1 | N/A |
| Receiving Stolen Property | 2 | 2% | 2 | 1% |
| Robbery | 4 | 4% | 4 | 3% |
| Shoplifting | 26 | 24% | 38 | 27% |
| Trespassing | 7 | 6% | 8 | 6% |
| Vandalism | 3 | 3% | 2 | 1% |
| Violation of Restraining Order | 1 | 1% | 1 | N/A |
| Warrants | 2 | 2% | 2 | 1% |
| TOTAL | 108 | | 143 | |

Crime

The Crime Analysis Unit (CAU) understands that the complaint of the average citizen or business is “visible” problems such as public intoxication, aggressive panhandling, and sleeping on public benches – *not* criminal incidents. However, the CAU suspects that if the average citizen or business comprehended the extent of crimes committed by homeless individuals – particularly in the Central Square area – their priorities would rapidly shift. Here are some quick facts:

- ▶ 10% of all arrests from January 1, 2001 to December 1, 2002 in our arrest database involve an offender who gives his/her address as “homeless” or as one of the known shelters in Cambridge, Somerville, or Boston. We expect this percentage would be higher if we broadened our search to include shelters in other cities and towns, the police department does not have data from these addresses.
- ▶ The most common address given by someone arrested in Cambridge is 240 Albany St., accounting for 46% of the homeless arrests since January 1st, 2002. The second most common is simply “homeless”, accounting for an additional 42% of this population.
- ▶ Four out of the five most common addresses given by persons arrested in Cambridge indicate homelessness or residence at a homeless shelter (the fifth, which is a short-term residence on Mass. Ave., indicates transience but is not counted in our “homeless” statistics).
- ▶ The majority of arrests for homeless individuals are executed in Central Square, where 49% (67 incidents) of the apprehensions took place. Inman (7), Porter (11), and Harvard (16) Squares accounted for an additional 34% of the activity.

Though accounting for about .5% of the population in Cambridge, homeless individuals make up 10% of the total arrests. Crimes influenced heavily by vagrant activity include simple assault (usually homeless fighting each other), burglary of homes, businesses, and automobiles, disorderly conduct, drinking in public, indecent exposure (“flashing” or public urination), and trespassing. In June of 2002, a known homeless man was arrested on Putnam Ave. for possession of heroin and again in August for brutally beating a woman he was staying with. The attacker used a baseball bat to cause severe facial trauma to the woman, requiring extensive reconstructive surgery.

Crime concerns dealing with the homeless and vagrancy since the beginning of 2002 include the following:

- ▶ **Shoplifting** consisted of the most frequent crime in 2002 with 38 arrests of homeless individuals. Last year, in 2001, shoplifting also recorded the greatest number of arrests with 26 out of the total 108 arrests. The Cambridge Galleria, Harvard Square’s, and Central Square’s plethora of retail establishments are sure bets for shoplifting, as they were in over 50% of the locations of arrests in 2001-2002.
- ▶ The majority of **aggravated assaults** involving the homeless include altercations, fights, and use of deadly weapons against other homeless individuals. The major hotspot over the past two years has been in and around Harvard Square. Areas near the shelters are also hot spots for assaults, including an incident in early April when two residents of 240 Albany St. got into a physical fight outside of the shelter, stemming from a verbal argument. The assailant lunged toward the victim, put him in a ‘choke-hold’ against a brick wall and assaulted the victim. Other hotspots include Central Square and Porter Square where arguments more frequently break out when alcohol is involved. Commonly, volatile situations arise after a domestic altercation and/or when service is denied at a local bar or liquor store.
- ▶ **Trespassing** arrests are usually the result of sleeping in ATMs, attempting to enter commercial locations that these persons have been denied access to, as well as going onto campuses, such as M.I.T., and into their buildings. A total of eight arrests were made for this crime in 2002, including an incident in the middle of May when two men from 240 Albany St. were found in a bus owned by the Union Baptist Church, which they had been living in, and boarded up so that they could not be seen.
- ▶ **Disorderly/Affray** incidents involve situations that range from not cooperating with the police, to acting belligerent due to intoxication, to yelling obscenities, to urinating in public. All of these incidents in 2002 took place in Central Square, largely due to the fact of the availability of liquor at local bars and liquor stores.
- ▶ **Simple Assaults** usually occur for similar reasons as aggravated assaults. Arguments develop as the result of domestic situations, usually when liquor is involved and are also between two or more homeless people. Half of the arrests for this type of crime took place in Central Square.

The 5 Most Common Addresses Given by Persons Arrested in Cambridge Since January 1st, 2002

| | |
|-----------------------------|----|
| 240 Albany St. (CASPAR) | 61 |
| “Homeless” | 56 |
| Long Island Shelter, Boston | 3 |
| Pine Street Inn, Boston | 3 |
| Other Shelters | 9 |

- ▶ ~~Drinking in Public~~ is most commonly done in areas such as Central Square, Harvard Square, and in parks such as Sennott and Vellucci.

Offenders

The offenders in Cambridge whom are homeless are usually known to the Cambridge Police Department, and many of the offenders have a criminal record that dates back to years ago. The following are some statistics on this population within the City of Cambridge:

- ▶ Since 1997, thirteen homeless people have been arrested 10 times or more, for various offenses. There are currently 335 arrested homeless persons that are in the database only one time – the remaining 600 names are all repeat offenders. The most prolific offender has been arrest 14 times since 1997.
- ▶ For the calendar year of 2002, thirty-six homeless persons have been arrested more than once, accounting for a total of 87 arrests. The most prolific repeat offender for this year was arrested six times.
- ▶ Of the 188 homeless persons in the arrest database for 2002, 10% of the offenders are female while 90% are male.
- ▶ The oldest person is 61; the youngest is 18. The average age of an arrested homeless offender is 40.
- ▶ Most arrested homeless offenders are between the ages of 32 and 49. This age range accounts for 41% of the arrests from 2002.
- ▶ There are 36 repeat offenders from 2002, who range from two to six arrests, which accounts for 24% of the homeless arrested population. Of the 239 arrests made in 2002, this selected population is accountable for 90 of the arrests.

Hot Spots

The following is an analysis of the hot spots for homeless activity. As in the past, these areas are constant ‘hang outs’ for homeless people to gather and in some cases, to sleep.

1. **240 Albany St.:** Many incidents that occur at this location involve the residents of the shelter at this address. Typical situations involve verbal/physical quarrels between to homeless people, often involving an intoxicated party.
2. **Central Square/400-500 block of Mass Ave.:** The majority of homeless arrests are executed in this area. Since Central Square experiences such high foot and mobile traffic, it serves as a great outlet for homeless people to panhandle and steal from stores. Along with numerous liquor stores, Central Square has become a known ‘hang-out’ area for homeless persons.
3. **Galleria Mall:** situations that rise in this area usually involve shoplifting. Due to the commercial nature of the area, many homeless persons attempt to steal items from the Galleria and either pawn it on the street or stores. A popularly targeted item is compact disks and cassette tapes, which can later be pawned at numerous local used music establishments that ask no questions and require no identification from the sellers.
4. **Inman Square/1300 Cambridge St.:** Sporadic problems take place near Cambridge City Hospital in the early morning hours. Citizens also complain about intoxicated homeless persons in Vellucci Park.
5. **Harvard Square:** A majority of incidents that occur here are due to vagrancy and intoxication. Homeless people tend to ‘hang-out’ in areas like these where a large amount of people are, and more opportunity for theft presents itself. Another common offense is trespassing onto campuses, such as Harvard, where homeless people are not allowed.
6. **Cambridge Common:** Out of the seven incidents in the Common, six were for either drinking in public, possession of narcotics, or indecent exposure.
7. **Porter Square:** Many complaints coming from Porter Square were from citizens and business owners for homeless persons “hanging out” in the area. They were irritating customers, especially in front of CVS Pharmacy on White St. in the Porter Square Shopping Center.
8. **Fresh Pond Mall:** Of the seven arrests reported from this shopping plaza, six were of shoplifting and the remaining one arrest was for drinking in public.